

Eventbrite

The Rise of Pop-Up Dining Events
and the Experiential Diner





“Launching my pop-up, Co+Lab, is helping me to create a business of my own. As an entrepreneur I’ve always wanted to have a restaurant, and pop-up events have given me the opportunity to present my food to people and let them experience what I have to offer.”

Chef Melissa King, Top Chef Season 12, creator of Co+Lab the pop-up.

To explore the value of these events and the guests who attend them, we surveyed more than 2,000 people that attended a pop-up dining experience on Eventbrite. Here's what we found:

01 Pop-up dining events attract guests who are willing and eager to pay more for a unique dining experience.

Three in four (75%) pop-up event attendees believe it's worth paying more money for a unique dining experience. In fact, 50% of respondents say that even with the exact same menu, they'd be willing to pay more for a meal at a pop-up event with a chef interaction than for a meal at a regular restaurant (\$58 dollars more per person on average).

Cost is not a major concern to the experiential diner — 59% don't feel that a pop-up dining event's cost is very important when deciding whether or not to attend. What is important? A unique menu or theme (84%), events that promise to be one-of-a-kind (74%) and a memorable location (76%). More than four in five (83%) would rather attend these events in non-traditional venues over restaurants.

Industry Tip

When pricing your tickets, remember that guests will shell out the dough for a premium experience. Play up the unique aspects of your event in your marketing, whether it be a rare ingredient or an unexpected venue. This is especially true for the newest generation of diners. Over half of millennial diners admit they are more likely to attend events if they are exclusive or secret. Experiment with revealing your location the day of the event, or offering limited seating at a chef's table to create excitement around a can't-miss experience.

02 Experiential diners are embracing the ticketing trend.

Eight in ten pop-up event attendees say they actually prefer to buy tickets in advance rather than pay at the end of the meal. It creates a more relaxing environment for both the guests and the chef, so that the day-of can be all about the food. These diners view the meal as a valuable experience that they expect to pay ahead of time for, much like a concert or sporting event.

On average, diners said they'd pay \$98 for a ticket to a pop-up restaurant event with a meal prepared by their favorite chef, surpassing what they'd be willing to spend on a performance by their favorite band (\$96), or on a ticket to see their favorite sports team (\$74). These diners are also open to innovation when it comes to alternatives to the restaurant reservation system: 55% say they would dine just as often or more often at a restaurant they liked if it required a pre-paid ticket.

Industry Tip

Pre-paid ticketed dinners are a win-win. Guests don't have to worry about the bill looming at the end of the meal, and you'll know exactly how many seats you need to fill to turn a profit — while avoiding food waste and lost revenue due to no-shows. You can even offer the option of paying for add-ons or alcohol pairings at the time of purchase so that the focus of the meal is the food, not the bill.

03 These diners are lucrative, influential tastemakers that dine out and go out often.

Experiential diners tend to be the leaders and influencers in their social circles — 65% say they often plan big group outings among their friends, and 72% say that people often come to them for restaurant recommendations. When they like a particular restaurant or chef, they are strong advocates — over a third (37%) post online reviews directly following a good experience, and nearly two-thirds (62%) have posted food photos on social media in the last three months.

They skew female, millennial, and affluent. (69% are women, 51% are age 18-34, and 28% of respondents make \$130,000+.) They dine out frequently, with 55% eating out for dinner at least twice a week, and they can't get enough pop-up events. Nearly half say they attend pop-up events at least four times per year, and 84% say they'll attend just as many — or more — in the next year.

Industry Tip

Diners that attend your pop-up event are valuable patrons with the potential to be evangelists for your brand. Recognize them! Offer your past pop-up attendees first dibs on your next event, and make sure you provide a way for them to give feedback and recommendations.



“There are so many chefs out there — they have their restaurants, their day jobs, but they’re looking for something more. That’s what the pop-up culture offers them. They are able to take over someone’s space for only a few hours and convert it into their own identity. It’s not just about the food, it’s about creating a memorable experience for the guests.”

Chef Melissa King, Top Chef Season 12,
creator of Co+Lab the pop-up.

04 Pop-up events can turn guests into powerful, vocal advocates for chefs and restaurants.

Pop-up events activate the social currency of these diners — after having a positive pop-up dining experience, 90% would recommend the restaurant or chef to loved ones, and 87% say they'd return to the restaurant with friends.

The ephemeral, one-of-a-kind nature of these events make them inherently more shareable. Diners are more likely to share posts on social media about a pop-up dining experience than about a night out at a restaurant (75% versus 51%) and are nearly three times more likely to follow or communicate with a chef or restaurant after a pop-up event compared to a regular meal (95% vs. 33%).

Industry Tip

Millennial diners are especially susceptible to FOMO (fear of missing out). 72% say that seeing friends post pictures of dining experiences makes them wish they could be there. Create a hashtag for your event that is incorporated on the event page or menu, and share photo “teasers” of the can't-miss dishes leading up to when ticket sales go live.

05 Experiential diners are craving connection to their food, the chef, and each other.

Nearly 60% of these experiential diners say they go to pop-up food events because they enjoy the communal aspect, and would attend more events in this category if their friends were attending (55%), or there was some kind of social element (47%). These diners not only want to connect with their friends, but also enjoy the spontaneity of making new friends around a shared experience.

Pop-up experiences also provide an intimate atmosphere to get to know the makers and ingredients behind a meal — satiating the experiential diners' desire to form a personal connection to their food, and go deeper than what can be gleaned from just reading a menu. 55% say they are more likely to attend if there is potential for a more personal interaction with the chef, and 49% would be interested in attending more of these events if local ingredients were used.

Industry Tip

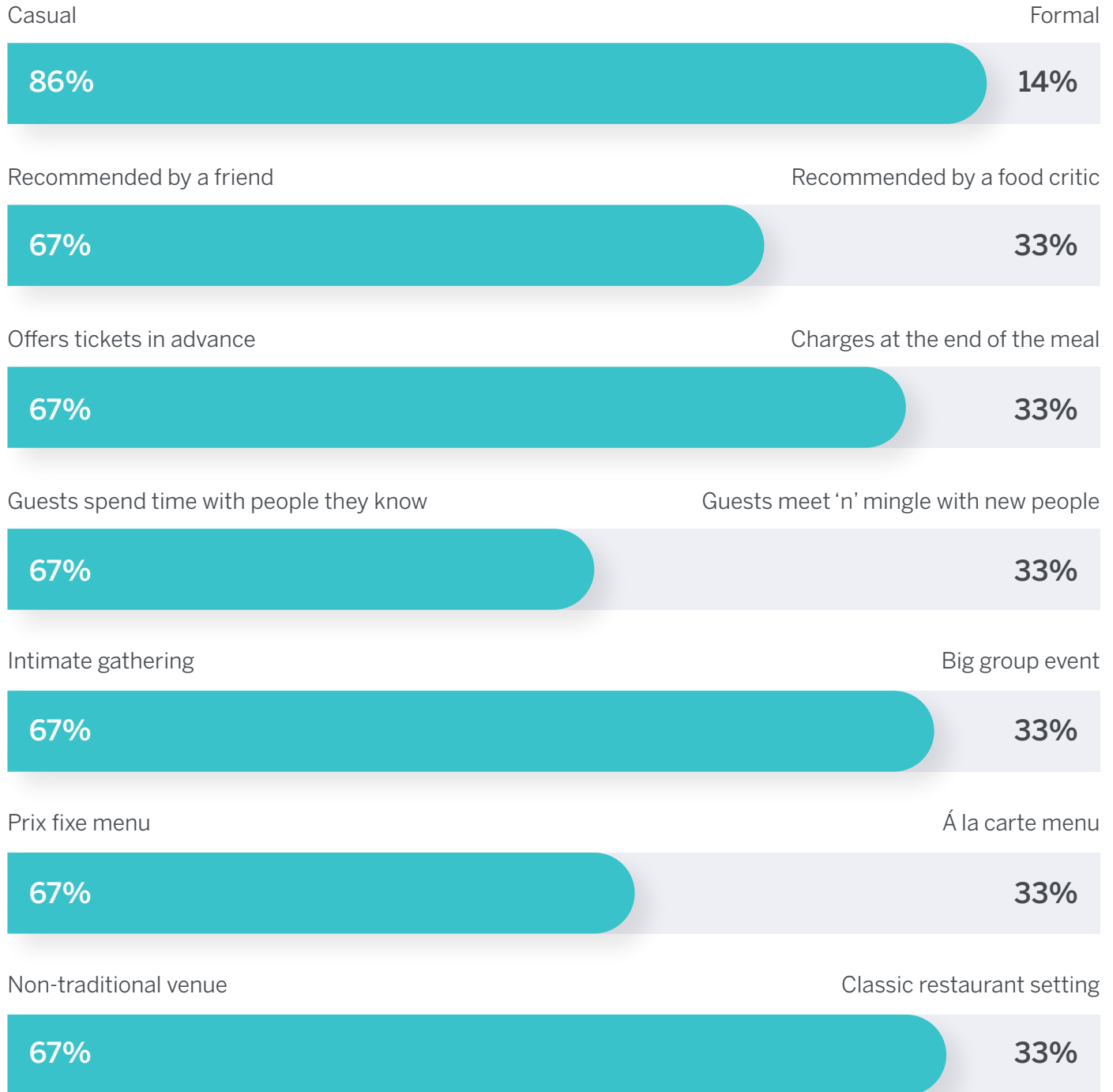
Create opportunities for diners to mix and mingle. Consider communal seating or a group toast to kick off the night. Tuck an icebreaker into the guests' place setting and encourage them to share a fun fact. And remember, experiential diners want to hear your story! Even if you can't have a personal interaction with every guest, find ways to elevate the experience — invite guests to come into the kitchen and ask questions, or explain the inspiration behind the dishes as they come out.



“Pop-ups are a way to show people how you’re evolving. I worked at someone else’s restaurant for so long; you’re doing their food. No one knows what food I’m doing other than what they’ve seen on TV. Pop-ups are a way to let people taste and experience your food.”

Chef Mei Lin,
Top Chef Season 12.

Hosting a pop-up event? Here's what your guests are looking for.



Source: Eventbrite "Food & Drink 2014 Trends" study. Based on survey of 2,000+ attendees of US Pop-up dining experiences and special food & beverage events on Eventbrite in 2014. Data analysis for this survey was conducted by Kelton, a leading global insights and research firm.

If you're hosting a pop-up event of your own, check out the [pop-up playbook](#). We gathered top chefs, mixologists, and event experts to create the [complete guide to organizing a pop-up event](#).

Eventbrite

Eventbrite powers more than two million live experiences each year, hosting the world's largest online selection of events. Organizers use Eventbrite to boost ticket sales, promote and manage events, and analyze results. Event-goers use Eventbrite to discover exciting things to do and get tickets on a safe, easy-to-use platform.

To find out how you can innovate with Eventbrite and grow your event, visit www.eventbrite.com/blog/overview, or give us a call at (866) 902-2531.

Methodology

For this study, Eventbrite analyzed data from more than 40,000 food and beverage events that took place on the Eventbrite platform in 2014. Eventbrite then surveyed more than 2,000 attendees of pop-up dining experiences on Eventbrite in 2014 to understand attendee motivations and behaviors. Eventbrite partnered with Kelton, a leading global insights and research firm, to analyze the survey results. All photos by Nam-Chi Van, @namchivan.